



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 8**

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**MAR 2 2016**

Ref: 8EPR-N

Amber Kamps, District Ranger  
Lincoln Ranger District  
c/o Erin Fryer, Interdisciplinary Team Leader  
Helena National Forest  
1569 Highway 200  
Lincoln, MT 59639

RE: Blackfoot Travel Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, CEQ# 20160027

Dear District Ranger Kamps:

Pursuant to our responsibilities and authority under Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 (EPA) has reviewed the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's January 2016 Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Blackfoot Travel Plan (Non-Winter). This Final EIS was prepared by the Helena National Forest's Lincoln Ranger District to analyze the environmental impacts associated with proposed changes to the existing system of designated non-winter motorized public access routes, including prohibition areas.

The EPA provided comments on the Draft EIS with a March 6, 2013 letter. The Draft EIS analyzed three alternatives, but no Preferred Alternative was identified. In addition to motorized use, both action alternatives included proposals for non-motorized uses and methods to physically store, decommission, relocate, and construct certain roads and trails. Alternative 3 proposed the lowest mileage and open road density, the most miles of decommissioning, and the greatest reduction in road sediment transport to streams. The EPA's primary concerns with the Draft EIS were related to water quality, fisheries, wildlife habitat, and soil integrity.

The EPA appreciates several of the new features of the Final EIS. For example, the Final EIS includes a new Alternative 4 (Preferred Alternative) developed in response to comments received during the public comment period on the Draft EIS. As compared to Draft EIS Alternative 3, the new Alternative 4 includes more miles of roads closed to public wheeled motorized use and more miles of roads to be decommissioned. In addition and perhaps most notably, the Chapter 2 Project Design Features Section includes numerous expanded and new measures to protect hydrology, soils, and aquatic species and habitat. These features will improve protections for water quality, fisheries, wildlife habitat and soil integrity.

We appreciated the opportunity to review this Final EIS. If we may provide further explanation of our comments, please contact me at 303-312-6704, or your staff may contact Amy Platt at 303-312-6449 or [platt.amy@epa.gov](mailto:platt.amy@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "P. Strobel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Philip" and last name "Strobel" clearly distinguishable.

Philip S. Strobel  
Director, NEPA Compliance and Review Program  
Office of Ecosystems Protection and Remediation